

Boys Are Victims, Too: The Influence of Perpetrators' Age and Gender in Sexual Coercion Against Boys

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Abstract

Sexual coercion among adolescent boys in South Africa is an underresearched topic despite the frequency of such events. Although quantitative research has illuminated the prevalence of sexual coercion toward boys, it has provided little understanding of the context of sexual coercion for adolescent boys. Given the often severe consequences of sexual coercion, it is important to further understand these experiences to inform prevention efforts. The current study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the context of sexual coercion. Data come from the baseline assessment for a translational research evaluation of a school-based intervention. The current study focuses on a subset of early and middle adolescent boys who reported

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experiencing sexual coercion ($n = 223$). Analyses examine boys' reports of their perpetrators' characteristics and details about the sexual coercion encounter. Logistic regression is used to examine how coercion tactics used by the perpetrator differs depending on the perpetrator's age and gender. Eighth-grade boys were most likely to report that their perpetrator was a similar-aged female and that perpetrator's age played a particularly important role in what tactics were used. Adult perpetrators were more likely to use physical force, threaten them, harass them electronically, and drink or use drugs at the time. Results provide important insight into boys' experiences of sexual coercion that have implications for both future research and intervention efforts. Although much research is needed on the topic, intervention programs should recognize that both male and female adolescents can be victim and perpetrator.

Keywords

sexual violence, adolescent victims, male victims, South Africa

Nearly one out of every five South African adolescents reports experiencing coerced sex by 16 years of age (Andersson et al., 2012). Data from South Africa's 2008 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicate that 12.3% of adolescents in Grade 8 report having been forced to have sex when they did not want to have sex, with boys more likely to report being forced to have sex than girls (16.7% vs. 7.8%; Reddy et al., 2010). Sexual violence toward boys contributes to a range of negative consequences including depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, risky sexual behavior, problematic drinking, and poor life satisfaction (Buzi et al., 2003; Choudhary, Coben, & Bossarte, 2008; Choudhary, Smith, & Bossarte, 2012; Nayak, Lown, Bond, & Greenfield, 2012; Raj, Silverman, & Amaro, 2000).

Although most of the research on consequences of sexual violence for male victims has been conducted with adult men in the United States, similar results have been found in the few studies based in Africa, including South African (Nduna & Jewkes, 2013) and Nigerian adolescents (Olley, 2008). Nonetheless, most research on sexual coercion focuses primarily on girls and women, leaving the phenomenon of sexual coercion against boys largely unexplored and not well understood. This gap in research may be in part due to the belief that sexual coercion either does not happen to adolescent boys or is qualitatively different from coercion against girls (Moore, Madise, & Awusabo-Asare, 2012; Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2009). For example, researchers have suggested that sexual coercion toward adolescent boys may not be

as severe a problem for boys as girls (Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2009), particularly when the perpetrator is a female. However, little is known about how boys' experiences of sexual coercion vary based on the gender and age characteristics of the perpetrator. Consequently, it is important to understand how sexual coercion toward adolescent boys varies across different characteristics of the perpetrator.

Who Are the Perpetrators?

In a national survey of sexual coercion toward boys, Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) found that most perpetrators of sexual coercion toward South African boys aged 10 to 19 years were adults. Adults who were not teachers or family were most common (28%), followed by teachers (20%) and adult family members (18%). Peers accounted for 18% of perpetrators and nearly a quarter of adolescents reported more than one type of perpetrator. Female perpetrators were most common, particularly in urban areas, but many adolescents reported both male and female perpetrators, suggesting that many victims of sexual coercion are re-victimized by other perpetrators. However, this study did not indicate if there was a difference in gender between adult and peer perpetrators, nor if there was a difference in the tactics used by perpetrators.

Another nationally representative survey of South African adolescents (aged 12-22 years) found the majority of sexual assaults (including any sexual behavior without the adolescent's consent ranging from kissing to intercourse, or forcing the adolescent to touch the perpetrator in a sexual way) were perpetrated by someone the victim knew; nearly a quarter of respondents reported that the event occurred within their home (Leoschut, 2009). It is not evident from this study if these findings are similar for both girls and boys as the data presented were combined for girls and boys.

Gender of Perpetrators

Some researchers have suggested that experiences of sexual coercion by a female perpetrator may be qualitatively different from coercion from a male perpetrator as sexual coercion of boys by adult females may take the form of temptation and have more mild effects than coercion from an adult male (Moore et al., 2012; Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2009). In their interviews, Sikweyiya and Jewkes (2009) found some South African boys reported being flattered by the advances of older women, whereas others felt guilty or embarrassed. In many of the narratives, boys were pressured into having sex by older adolescent girls or substantially older women, and reported being curious or interested in sex in some ways, but not consenting and not wanting

it in other ways. Conversely, boys reporting male perpetrators were more likely to report feelings of anger and a desire for revenge. However, these reflections may be influenced by men's perceptions of cultural norms that suggest that men should always desire sex from a woman. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this research limits our ability to understand the scope of the problem.

Nonetheless, Moore and colleagues' (2012) research in sub-Saharan Africa found that young men who reported unwanted sex often gave reasons for having sex that were contrary to typical notions of sexual coercion. For example, nearly half of those reporting that their first sex was "not willing at all" reported that they had sex because it felt natural or they felt like it, whereas a fifth reported that they had sex because of pressure from their friends. This study focused on unwanted sex, which may or may not have been consensual as research shows that both men and women often have ambiguous feelings toward sex (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). Reporting that sex was unwanted may also reflect regret about one's prior sexual encounter. Furthermore, the study focused primarily on older adolescents and young adults, which may not be representative of the experiences of early and middle adolescent boys.

Age of Perpetrators

Adult perpetrators may use different tactics than younger perpetrators due to their relative position, size, and relationship to the victim. Both male and female perpetrators who are older are likely to be physically larger than early adolescent males, which may allow adult perpetrators to physically overpower their victims. In economically poor regions, older men and women may force boys into sexual relationships in exchange for protection, money, and/or shelter (Heise, Moore, & Toubia, 1995; Njue, Askew, & Chege, 2005). South African values of respect for elders and obedience may also facilitate sexual coercion through subtler tactics. In ethnographies, South African adolescents frequently report difficulties in refusing and disobeying those older than them (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, & Rose-Junius, 2005; Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2009). Boys may be asked to assist someone in a task and end up alone with the perpetrator and unable to escape. Adolescents often report great discomfort in disagreeing with older men and women, and may lead adolescents to feel obligated to submit to sex out of respect (Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2009).

Power discrepancies between the perpetrator and victim likely also contribute to the tactics used by the perpetrator and how sexual coercion is experienced by adolescents. How power discrepancies manifest likely depends on the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, as the perpetrator may be a

teacher, family member, romantic partner, or some other adult. Furthermore, family members may be either adults, such as parents, aunts, and uncles, or similar in age (such as siblings or cousins), thus the physical size of the perpetrator relative to the victim and power dynamics associated with the event may vary substantially. For example, sexual coercion from educators may be particularly problematic as education is critical for improving one's opportunities in life and reducing poverty. Educators have power over adolescents' education opportunities, potentially constraining adolescents' access to education and reducing adolescents' feelings of safety within their schools (Prinsloo, 2006). Sexual interactions between educators and learners may be transactional (see Prinsloo, 2006), particularly in areas of high poverty. Educators may also offer higher marks, or they may threaten learners with failure or corporal punishment (Department of Social Development [DSD], Department of Women, Children, and People with Disabilities [DWCPD], & United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2012).

Some research indicates that male adolescents typically seek younger partners (Ragnarsson, Onya, Thorson, Ekström, & Aarø, 2008), while other research suggests that boys may also be drawn to older partners (Frank, Esterhuizen, Jinabhai, Sullivan, & Taylor, 2008). Older partners can offer material gifts, access to a car, and cash (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004), which may be especially appealing to boys living in poverty. Gifts or money may leave adolescents feeling obligated to engage in sex even when they do not wish to, or fearing that their partner will terminate the relationship if they do not submit. For example, Kenyan boys report being forced into sexual relationships by older males in exchange for money or shelter (Njue et al., 2005). Economic conditions that lead to dependency on others for basic necessities, such as food and shelter, perpetuate sexual coercion (Heise et al., 1995).

In a small study of Grade 10 South African adolescents, 40% of boys reported receiving gifts or money for sex (Frank et al., 2008). Such transactions may still lead to coercive relationships in which boys do not feel they are able to refuse sex, particularly if they are dependent on the financial support of their partner as adolescents worried about having enough food to eat are more likely to be victims of sexual coercion (Andersson et al., 2012; Ybarra, Bull, Kiwanuka, Bangsberg, & Korchmaros, 2012). Gift exchanging is common with both similar-aged and older partners (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004); however, older partners are more likely to have the means to provide more elaborate gifts and basic necessities (i.e., food, school uniforms, and supplies), thus leading adolescents to feel dependent on their partner.

Although power discrepancies can still be present in peer relationships, the dynamics of these relationships are likely different from the dynamics in adult-adolescent relationships. Sexual coercion from similar-aged peers is

more likely to come in the form of pressure to prove one's masculinity. Interviews conducted with young men in four sub-Saharan countries support the strong influence of peer pressure as pressure from friends was the most commonly cited reason for unwanted sex at sexual debut (Moore et al., 2012). Research conducted in Zambia suggests that older boys may recruit older girls to serve as "educators" of sex for younger boys (Simpson, 2007). The literature does not indicate if these encounters are volitional or not, it is likely that the high level of pressure to engage in sex for boys and appear masculine may limit their ability to refuse these encounters. Such interactions may explain the high reports of peer pressure involved in sexual encounters that are reported as unwanted or coerced across sub-Saharan Africa (Moore et al., 2012). In an extreme case of peer pressure, Wood (2005) reported instances in South Africa where both a boy and girl being forced to have sex with each other by a gang. In such cases, both the male and female sexual partners may identify themselves as victims.

More often, however, pressure comes in the form of teasing and taunting from other boys or girls. Girls may coerce boys into sex by threatening to tell others that the boy did not desire to have sex (Selikow, Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews, & Mukoma, 2009). Boys' girlfriends may also pressure boys to have sex to prove their love and faithfulness or threaten to end the relationship. Such threats may have strong social implications for boys as young men who abstain from sex may be perceived as weak (Jewkes et al., 2005) and are likely to be ostracized by peers (Selikow et al., 2009). Boys are also ridiculed for not having a girlfriend (Moore et al., 2012), as having and being able to maintain a girlfriend is a sign of one's masculinity (Ragnarsson et al., 2008). These messages may limit boys' ability and/or willingness to refuse sex because of fear of stigmatization. The qualitative nature of the research makes it difficult to discern the relative prevalence of pressure from peers and girlfriends compared with other tactics.

Male and female adolescents perpetrating sexual coercion in Uganda frequently report using lies and deception to coerce someone into sex (Ybarra et al., 2012). Giving the other person alcohol or drugs or using physical force were less common, though one in 10 boys and girls reported using physical force when perpetrating sexual coercion. It is unclear whether such tactics are used in South Africa or if there would be differences between adult and peer perpetrators.

Study Aims and Research Questions

The current study aims to better understand the characteristics of coercive sexual experiences among early and middle adolescent South African boys in

Grade 8 and how these characteristics vary across experiences with different types of perpetrators. Specifically, we examine the extent to which the age and gender of the perpetrator predict the tactics used by the perpetrator. Given differences in both size and power dynamics between adults and adolescents, we expect that adolescents who report adult perpetrators will be more likely to report that their perpetrators use physical tactics and tactics such as blackmail, threats, and use of gifts to coerce adolescents. Likewise, we expect adolescents will be more likely to report adult perpetrators when tactics involving alcohol and drugs are involved as adults likely have more resources for obtaining alcohol and drugs. We expect boys who report that the perpetrator was pressured by friends to be more likely to report a similar-aged perpetrator. Finally, given the suggestion by past research that perpetration by a female may resemble temptation (Moore et al., 2012; Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2009), we expect boys who report a female perpetrator will be more likely to report tactics such as pleading or tricking.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Data for this study come from the baseline assessment of adolescents ($N = 10,103$) in 56 schools participating in a translational research study of the HealthWise curriculum (Caldwell et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2008) in Cape Town, South Africa. Students used netbooks to complete the survey in English, which is widely understood and spoken by most adolescents in the Cape Town region. Research staff were available to answer questions and assist with any technical difficulties that arose. Community-based collaborative consent and active, informed student assent procedures were approved by The Pennsylvania State University's, University of the Western Cape's, and Western Cape Education Department's Institutional Review Boards. Community-based collaborative consent parent advisory boards at each school reviewed study procedures and provided consent for the student body. Information was sent home to parents, and parents could withdraw a student from the study if they wished. This approach is in line with the cultural norms in South Africa that value community decision making (Zuch, Mason-Jones, Mathews, & Henley, 2012). This approach also respects the autonomy of adolescents and insures that adolescents who are most at risk and in need of intervention are not excluded due to parental illiteracy, which is important in South Africa where adult literacy rates are low and HIV risks are high.

The current study focuses on early and middle adolescent boys (below 16 years) because past research suggests sexual coercion toward boys most often

occurs before 16 years of age (Andersson & Ho-Foster, 2008), and sexual coercion may be different for older adolescents who are often physically larger and stronger. Of the 4,865 boys who completed the baseline survey, 109 did not provide a response for the sexual coercion question, and 347 were 16 years old or older. Of the remaining 4,409 boys, 235 reported sexual coercion (5.33%). An additional 12 boys were excluded from analyses as they did not provide information on the age of their perpetrator. Our final sample consisted of 223 boys below 16 years of age, who reported experiencing sexual coercion. Boys who were excluded because of skipped items were more similar to those who reported sexual coercion than those who did not report sexual coercion.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. The majority of boys in the restricted sample reported living in a brick home, apartment, or flat (58.74%) and having tap water in their home (86.10%). Only half reported that their families had a motor car (50.67%). Boys predominantly identified as African Black (65.02%), though a substantial minority also identified as Colored/Multiracial (20.18%) or White (13.0%). Many participants reported speaking multiple languages at home, with 64.57% speaking Xhosa, 41.70% reported speaking a language other than those listed, 34.23% spoke English, and 34.53% spoke Afrikaans at home. Participants were between the ages of 12.3 years and 15.99 years, with a mean age of 14.35 years. In total, 16 participants (7.12%) were aged 13 years or younger at baseline.

Measures

We assessed *sexual coercion* by asking all learners if “anyone ever tried to make you have sex against your wishes?” Those who responded “Yes tried, sex did occur” were coded as having experienced sexual coercion. Adolescents were then asked a series of follow up questions including how many times they were coerced in the last 6 months, and about tactics used by the perpetrator, and characteristics of the perpetrator (e.g., gender, nature of relationship, and length of acquaintance) “the last time this happened.”

Perpetrator's tactics were measured with a series of nine questions about tactics that the perpetrator used the last time someone made them have sex against their will (Table 3). The measure was developed for this study based on Heise and colleagues' (1995) model of sexual coercion and past research on sexual coercion in African nations, as discussed in the literature review, that provides some insight into potential tactics (Njue et al., 2005; Wood, 2005). For example, adolescents were asked “Did he or she use physical

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Sample ($n = 223$).

Mean age (<i>SD</i>)	14.48 (0.88)
Language spoken at home	
English	34.23%
Afrikaans	34.53%
Xhosa	64.57%
Other	41.70%
Type of house	
Shack	14.35%
Wendy house or backyard building/room	16.14%
Tent	1.79%
Brink house, flat, or apartment	58.74%
Other	8.97%
Economic indicators	
Tap water in home	86.10%
Family own motor car	50.67%
Race	
Black	65.02%
White	13.00%
Colored or multiracial	20.18%
Indian	0.90%
Other	0.90%
Religion	
Christian—Catholic	27.60%
Christian—other denominations	25.79%
Traditional African Christian	28.96%
Hindu	0.90%
Islam	4.07%
Jewish	1.36%
Other	3.17%
None	8.14%

force?” and “Did he or she promise you gifts or rewards?” Finally, the item “Did he or she harass you electronically (e.g., with cell phone, mobile, the Internet)?” was included based on the growing influence of technology in the lives of adolescents and media reports on sexting and cyberbullying. Adolescents could endorse as many tactics as applicable (yes/no response).

Perpetrator's age was determined by the relationship of the perpetrator to the adolescents. Perpetrators were coded as similar-aged if they reported that they were “learners (students) of the same age as me,” “learner who is older than me,” or “other youth.” “Teachers,” “another adult at my school,” or “other adult” were coded as adult perpetrators. If an adolescent reported that

their perpetrator was a “family member” and that the perpetrator was reported to attend the same school as the adolescent, then we coded the perpetrator as a peer. All other family member perpetrators were assumed to be adults.

The *perpetrator’s gender* was assessed with a single question that asked adolescents if the last time they were sexually coerced was “by a male or female?”

Analytic Plan

Descriptive statistics about the context of coerced sex, the characteristics of the perpetrator, the nature of their relationship, and the use of condoms were based on boy’s reports of the encounter. Next, chi-square analyses were performed to test differences in the proportion of boys who reported each coercion tactic based on perpetrator’s gender (male vs. female) or perpetrator’s age (adult vs. similar-aged peer). Chi-square analyses were selected because they provide a parsimonious and an easily understood way of describing dichotomous data, providing a rich picture of the context of coercion experienced by adolescent boys. Testing multiple hypotheses simultaneously increases the probability of a significant result simply due to chance, which leads to a Type I error—rejecting the null hypothesis, when in fact the null hypothesis should have been accepted. It is possible to adjust for this increased risk of Type I error; however, these adjustments often reduce power substantially. Given that the current analyses are exploratory and the first of their kind, we followed guidelines that recommend not correcting for Type 1 error in exploratory analyses and rather urge readers to view our results as preliminary (Schochet, 2008).

Next, a series of logistic regression analyses was conducted to assess the role of perpetrator’s gender and age on the likelihood of adolescents reporting each perpetrator’s tactic the last time they had experienced coerced sex while controlling for demographic factors. To reduce the number of comparisons being tested, logistic regression models were only conducted for tactics that differed significantly at the $p \leq .005$ level based on reported characteristics of the perpetrator. The cutoff was selected based on the Hochberg (1988) method for controlling for multiple comparisons, which allows for more power than conservative approaches such as the Bonferroni method, and thus is useful with exploratory analyses (Schochet, 2008). All variables were effect coded.

Results

Context of Sexual Coercion Against Boys Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics on the context of sexual coercion toward South African boys are presented in Table 2. Of the 223 boys who reported that they were

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Context of Boys' Most Recent Sexual Coercion Experience ($n = 223$).

Times happened in last 6 months	
Zero	29.60%
Once	34.08%
Two or more times	36.32%
Two or more perpetrators	34.39%
Perpetrator type	
Similar-aged female	59.64%
Similar-aged male	18.83%
Adult female	12.56%
Adult male	8.97%
How well they knew the perpetrator	
Complete stranger	12.61%
Seen around but did not know	9.46%
Just met	17.12%
Acquaintance	6.31%
Knew person very well	28.38%
Knew person most of their life	19.82%
Other	6.31%
How they knew perpetrator	
Peer	47.53%
Older learner	18.39%
Other youth	9.87%
Teacher	6.73%
Other adult at school	8.97%
Family member	3.59%
Other adult	4.93%
Perpetrator attends victim's school	45.00%
Condom used	65.77%
Mean number of tactics reported (SD)	4.87 (2.85)

made to have sex against their wishes ("coerced sex"), boys most commonly reported a perpetrator who was a female (77.20%) and of similar age (78.61%, including same age learner, older learner, and other youth). Same age learners were the most frequently reported perpetrators (47.53%), followed by older learners (18.39%). Other adults in school (8.97%) and teachers (6.73%) were the most frequent adult perpetrators reported. On average, youth reported that their perpetrators used 4.87 ($SD = 2.85$) tactics the last time they were coerced with pleading (60.54%), electronic harassment (58.56%), and promises of gifts (55.40%) being the most frequent perpetrator's tactics (Table 3). Perpetrators were generally somebody boys knew well (28.38%) or most of

Table 3. Proportion of Boys Reporting Each Tactic by Perpetrator's Age and Gender.

	Full Sample (%)	Perpetrator's Gender		χ^2	Perpetrator's Age		
		Male (%)	Female (%)		Adult (%)	Similar-Aged (%)	χ^2
Tactics used by perpetrator							
Did he or she . . .							
... use physical force?	45.74	50.00	44.10	0.63	66.67	40.00	10.79***
... threaten you verbally?	48.20	58.06	44.38	3.35	66.67	43.10	8.37***
... blackmail you?	37.84	41.94	36.25	0.61	52.08	33.91	5.28*
... plead until you gave in?	60.54	67.74	57.76	1.87	66.67	58.86	0.96
... trick you?	45.70	48.39	44.65	0.25	62.50	41.04	6.97**
... promise you gifts or rewards?	54.50	62.90	51.25	2.45	70.83	50.00	6.59*
Was he or she pressured by their friends?	44.84	56.45	40.37	4.68*	56.25	41.71	3.22
... drug you or get you drunk against your will?	33.94	45.90	29.38	5.38*	54.17	28.32	11.19***
... harass you electronically? ^a	58.56	70.97	53.75	5.46*	76.60	53.71	7.99***

^aFor example, with cell phone, mobile, or the Internet.* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .005$.

their life (19.82%). A substantial subset reported that their perpetrator was a complete stranger (12.61%), someone they had seen around (9.46%), or someone they had just met (17.12%).

Chi-square analyses (Table 3) tested for differences in the proportion of boys reporting each tactic based on boys' report of their perpetrator's age (adult vs. similar-aged) and gender (male vs. female). Boys who identified an adult perpetrator were more likely than those identifying a similar-aged perpetrator to report that the perpetrator used physical force (66.67% vs. 40.00%, $\chi^2 = 10.79$, $p = .001$), threats (66.67% vs. 43.10%, $\chi^2 = 8.37$, $p = .004$), blackmail (52.08% vs. 33.91%, $\chi^2 = 5.28$, $p = .022$), tricked them (62.50% vs. 41.04%, $\chi^2 = 6.97$, $p = .008$), promises (70.83% vs. 50.00%, $\chi^2 = 6.59$, $p = .010$), electronic harassment (76.60% vs. 53.71%, $\chi^2 = 7.99$, $p = .0047$), and that they drugged them or gave them alcohol against their will (54.17% vs. 28.32%, $\chi^2 = 11.19$, $p = .001$). There was not a significant difference in the proportion of boys reporting that they were pressured or pleaded when reporting an adult or similar-aged perpetrator.

Chi-square analyses testing for differences in the proportion of boys reporting each tactic based on the perpetrator's gender suggest significant differences for three of the nine tactics (Table 3). Boys were more likely to report that the perpetrator used pressure (56.45% vs. 40.37%, $\chi^2 = 4.68$, $p = .031$), electronic harassment (70.97% vs. 53.75%, $\chi^2 = 5.46$, $p = .020$), or gave them drugs or alcohol against their will (45.90% vs. 29.38%, $\chi^2 = 5.38$, $p = .020$), when the gender of the perpetrator was reported to be male as opposed to female.

Logistic Regression Analyses

A series of five logistic regression models (Table 4) are estimated for the five tactics (physical force, threatened, tricked, drugged, or electronically harassed) that were found to significantly vary based on perpetrator's age at the $p = .005$ level in the chi-square analyses (note: none of the tactics varied significantly based on the perpetrator's age at the $p = .005$ level), controlling for participant's demographics and perpetrator's gender (Table 2). The main effect of the perpetrator's age was found to be significant for four out of five perpetrator's tactics. Boys had greater odds of reporting that the perpetrator used physical force (odds ratio [OR] = 3.15; 95% confidence interval [CI] = [1.53, 6.48]), threatened them (OR = 2.45; 95% CI = [1.20, 5.02]), gave them drugs or alcohol against their will (OR = 3.04; 95% CI = [1.47, 6.28]), and harassed them electronically (OR = 2.22; 95% CI = [1.02, 4.83]) when the perpetrator was an adult as opposed to a peer regardless of the perpetrator's gender. The perpetrator's gender was not a significant predictor of any of the five tactics.

Table 4. Adjusted Odds Ratio and Confidence Intervals of Reporting a Perpetrator’s Tactic Given the Perpetrator’s Age and Gender (*n* = 223).

	Physical Force	Verbally Threatened	Trick You	Drugged You or Got You Drunk Against Your Will	Harassed You Electronically
Adult (vs. similar-aged) perpetrator	3.15** [1.53, 6.48]	2.45* [1.20, 5.02]	2.00 [0.97, 4.10]	3.04*** [1.47, 6.28]	2.22* [1.02, 4.83]
Female (vs. male) perpetrator	0.93 [0.49, 1.78]	0.60 [0.32, 1.14]	1.07 [0.55, 2.06]	0.58 [0.29, 1.15]	0.60 [0.30, 1.19]

Note. Covariates included in the model: Race, home type, tap water in home, family has motor car, and participant’s age.
p* < .05. **p* < .01.

Discussion

Above 5% of the boys in our sample reported experiencing sexual coercion. These results support the need for a greater understanding of boys' sexual coercion, particularly as the current study likely underestimated the prevalence of sexual coercion. Many of the boys (78 out of 109) who refused to answer the sexual coercion item used in the analyses indicated that the last time they had sex it was forced or that the only time they had sex it was when they were forced. Findings from the current study suggest that perpetrators typically use multiple coercive tactics against boys, and it is the age of the perpetrator, rather than the gender, that is most predictive of what tactics are used. The nuanced follow up questions asked of boys who experienced sexual coercion is unique to this dataset and provides important insights into the experiences of boys.

Tactics Used By Adult Perpetrators

Boys reported that adult perpetrators were more likely to use physical force, threats, electronic harassment, and drugs and alcohol against the victim. These different tactics may provide some insight into differences in the context of sexual coercion when the perpetrator is an adult compared with a similar-aged peer. Further research is needed to get a clearer understanding of how these differences translate to the boys' experiences. Physical force and threats likely reflect a greater power discrepancy, both physically and psychologically, between victim and perpetrator when the perpetrator is an adult. Adult perpetrators may also have greater access to alcohol or drugs, which makes it more available in the context of sexual coercion.

The finding that electronic harassment was significantly more likely when boys reported an adult perpetrator is especially interesting as research on electronic harassment related to sexual coercion is limited. It may be that adults have more access to technology, particularly in poor areas where resources are limited, and thus are able to use mobile phones and other technologies to harass the victim. More research is needed to further understand how technology is used to coerce adolescents. Electronic harassment may or may not include sexually explicit videos and images. For example, perpetrators may take sexually explicit images or videos of the victim without consent, may pressure victims to send explicit images, or take videos or images with consent, but then threaten to distribute the images without the victim's consent. Research with Australian adult women suggests that perpetrators may use sexually explicit images to blackmail, and/or humiliate the victim, and can also be used to prevent a victim from ending an abusive relationship

(Henry & Powell, 2015). Electronic harassment may also be used to bombard a victim with coercive messages and harassment even when the victim is physically away from the perpetrator, creating an environment in which a victim is unable to escape their always “present” perpetrator.

Who Are the Perpetrators?

The finding that the majority of perpetrators are female is consistent with previous research in South Africa (Andersson & Ho-Foster, 2008). The high prevalence of similar-aged female perpetrators is counterintuitive, despite past qualitative research findings that supports the idea that girls may pressure boys into sex as a way to try and secure their relationships (Selikow et al., 2009). In the current study, similar-aged peers included “other youth” and “learners who are older than me,” thus some of the perpetrators who were female peers were in fact older than the victimized boys. Qualitative research suggests girls may have a relationship with a younger male partner to be able to exert control over their partner in a way that they are unable to do so in their other, often concurrent, relationships with same-aged or older male partners (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Nearly half of the participants reported that their perpetrator was pressured by friends, suggesting that both the male and female adolescents may have experienced coercion at the time of the sexual encounter. Qualitative research suggests that this may occur as part of gang violence (Wood, 2005) or in the context of using older girls to “educate” a younger boy about sex (Simpson, 2007).

When controlling for covariates, we did not find tactics to differ based on the perpetrator’s gender, suggesting that sexual coercion may not be less serious when perpetrated by females than males. For example, nearly half of boys reported that their perpetrator used physical force or threats, regardless of their gender. Such findings suggest that programs geared toward the prevention of sexual coercion are to acknowledge that both male and female adolescents experience sexual coercion, and use gender neutral language when discussing victims and perpetrators. This will help dispel myths that sexual coercion only happens to girls and that girls cannot be perpetrators of sexual coercion.

Although much of the popular press on sexual coercion focuses on perpetration by teachers (e.g., Koyana, 2014; Madlala, 2013; Ndlovu, 2009; Seale, 2013), victimization by a teacher does not represent the majority of sexual victimization cases in Cape Town. This finding suggests a far smaller proportion of sexual coercion occurs at the hands of educators than previous studies (Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga, & Bradshaw, 2002, as cited in DSD, DWCPD, & UNICEF, 2012). The divergence in findings may be a result of

the focus of the current study on male adolescents rather than female adolescents. Nonetheless, the power discrepancy in teacher–student dyads may be particularly problematic, and thus, teacher perpetration remains a concern for adolescents. Furthermore, most adolescents did report perpetrators who are in their schools: as peers, other adults in the school, or teachers. Consequently, prevention efforts that aim to improve the climate within the school, including reducing sexual harassment, and improving the overall safety in the schools may strengthen efforts to prevent sexual violence among students. In a study based in the United States, Taylor, Stein, Mumford, and Woods (2013) found that schools had “hot spots” where harassment and sexual violence were more likely to occur, and that increasing the presence of school personnel in those areas (along with other intervention components) helped reduce the level of harassment and sexual violence within the school. Such an approach may be valuable in South African schools that have a high prevalence of sexual coercion.

Past research found that “friends” were the most frequently reported perpetrators (Madu & Peltzer, 2001). However, it is unclear if study participants limited their report of “friends” to school-aged peers. In contrast, Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) found that most perpetrators of sexual coercion toward boys were adults. These differences may reflect differences in adolescent perceptions of who is, and is not, an adult or differences in the study design. While the current study focuses on adolescent boys’ most recent experience of sexual coercion, the study by Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) asked about all perpetrators across boys’ lifetimes, thus it is likely that boys are reflecting on both childhood sexual abuse (pre-adolescents) and sexual coercion during adolescence (which may also qualify as childhood sexual abuse depending on the age of the perpetrator). Childhood sexual abuse is more likely to be perpetrated by an adult or someone perceived as an adult (e.g., a much older adolescent).

Although participants in the current study are within a small age range, below 16 years of age, sexual coercion may be qualitatively different depending on the age of the participant. Past research suggests that sexual coercion toward boys in South Africa is most common prior to 16 years of age (Andersson & Ho-Foster, 2008), which may suggest that sexual coercion among adolescents above 16 years of age may be different than coercion toward younger adolescents. This is particularly true when the perpetrator is female, as younger adolescents may be overpowered by a female perpetrator. In contrast, an older adolescent boy is more likely to be larger and may be less likely to be physically forced by a perpetrator. In South Africa, the average age of sexual initiation among boys is 16.7 years (Pettifor et al., 2011). Thus, sexual coercion at a young age may be particularly influential on an

adolescent's sexual beliefs and behavior as these experiences likely proceed volitional sexual encounters. Despite the fairly large sample of high risk learners, the current sample is not large enough to further analyze the data by participant's age.

Limitations

Although the current study is the first to our knowledge to take an in-depth look into the context of sexual coercion for South African adolescent boys using quantitative data, several limitations should be noted. First, measurement of the relative age of a perpetrator was assessed by the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, which may lead to misclassification of some perpetrators. In particular, older learners and family members may be either adults or minors. In South Africa, it is fairly common for schools to have some learners in their early twenties who had left school to work and then later return to school. Furthermore, whereas family perpetrators could be adults such as parents, aunts, or uncles, they may also be siblings or cousins. However, only a small minority of participants identified perpetrators as family members; thus, this is likely to have a minimal impact on our findings.

Past research also suggests that some boys may interpret questions about sexual coercion in ways other than intended. For example, Moore and colleagues (2012) found that some men in African nations report being forced to have sex when they felt they were provoked by a woman's seductive dress. Similarly, men often gave contradictory accounts about their sexual encounters reporting both that they were unwilling to have sex at the time and that they had sex because it felt natural or they felt like it. These contradictory responses may reflect the pressure that men face to always want sex, or the idea that they must have enjoyed it or wanted it if they experienced an erection. A review of research with men in the United States suggests that men who endorse male rape myths such as these may not recognize their experience as sexual violence (Peterson, Voller, Polusny, & Murdoch, 2011). A similar phenomenon has been observed among female sexual assault victims (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). However, boys' reports of coercive tactics in the current study support the notion that the experiences they reported were in fact coercion.

Another limitation is that students could only report tactics that were included on the survey. The researchers attempted to provide a comprehensive list of perpetrator's tactics, but it is possible that other tactics were used that were not captured by the current study. Furthermore, this study was limited to one region of South Africa. Although participants were ethnically diverse, the findings may not generalize to adolescents outside of the Western Cape.

Conclusion

The current study supports the need for programs and services to address sexual coercion toward boys in South Africa, including programs that attempt to suppress the belief that men have an insatiable appetite for sex and are always ready for it (Petersen, Bhana, & McKay, 2005). Focusing solely on sexual coercion perpetrated by boys and men may reinforce these cultural norms, stigmatize male victims, and provide justification for sexual coercion perpetrated by males. Although the current study did not examine the consequences of sexual coercion, research with Ethiopian boys reported experiencing hopelessness and poor school performance subsequent to experiencing rape (Haile, Kebeta, & Kassie, 2013). Furthermore, research with female adolescents suggests that sexual coercion can have serious psychological and physical health consequences, which may vary depending on the context of the experience (Brown, Testa, & Messman-Moore, 2009). Thus, acknowledging the experience of sexual coercion among boys and the varied contexts may help prevention programs better address sexual coercion.

For both male and female individuals, distinguishing between consent and wantedness of sex is critical, as studies have indicated that both men and women often have mixed feelings about having sex (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). Consequences of sexual coercion may or may not be similar for male victims. Nonetheless, holding a double standard for what constitutes sexual coercion, or what types of sexual coercion are problematic, is dangerous. The argument that they “wanted it” or “enjoyed it” is at the core of victim blaming justifications often used against women victims of sexual coercion (Koss et al., 1994). Such messages may promote the idea that consent does not matter, which may partially account for past research showing that adolescents who report sexual victimization are also more likely to report perpetrating sexual coercion (Andersson & Ho-Foster, 2008). As with women, men’s sexual desire, or even enjoyment of the event, does not discredit any refusal or validate consent obtained through duress.

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